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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the residential treatment program at Daniel Memorial, a private agency for 24 emotionally troubled adolescents. Students are said to live on campus for 5 days and return home on weekends. The role of the teacher is focused on, and the Getzels-Guba model is used to picture the organizational areas of conflict or congruence for the teacher. Attention is paid to conflicts in role expectations and the need for role clarity on an interdisciplinary team. Conflicting needs of the individual, the relationship between the agency's expectations and the employee's needs and resulting job satisfactions or dissatisfactions are also discussed. The Getzels-Guba model is explained to be useful in predicting areas of potential difficulties, describing and interpreting natural interactions, and serving as a diagnostic tool. (CL)

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THE AGONY AND THE ECSTACY

The Teacher of Emotionally Handicapped Adolescents in a Residential Treatment Setting

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ABSTRACT

After describing briefly the residential treatment program at Daniel Memorial, this paper discusses the "agonies and ecstacies" of the teacher's roles there. The Getzels-Guba model is used to picture the organizational areas of conflict or congruence for the teacher in that system. Specific attention is paid to conflicts in role expectations and the need for role clarity on an interdisciplinary team. Conflicting needs of the individual, the relationship between the agency's expectations and the employee's needs and resulting job satisfactions or dissatisfactions are also discussed. These issues are particularly important in a setting where emotionally handicapped students present daily challenges and pressures for the entire staff. The model presented here using Daniel Memorial as the setting is useful to others in predicting, diagnosing, and describing conflicts within an organization.

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THE AGONY AND THE ECSTACY

The Teacher of Emotionally Troubled Adolescents in a Residential Treatment Setting

Caroline H. Swain, Director of Education, Daniel Memorial

Daniel Memorial is a residential treatment center, a private agency located on a wooded campus on the south side of Jacksonville, Florida. The program provides residential treatment for 24 emotionally troubled adolescents, boys and girls from the ages of 12 to 16. In our "5-2" program the students live on campus for five days a week and return home on weekends. This combination of residential and nonresidential treatment keeps issues apparent, keeps families involved, helps the child maintain contact with his own community. . . and provides many challenges to staff especially on Mondays and Fridays. Therapy is provided for families, as well as the child in residence, and continues after the child is discharged.

The students at Daniel Memorial have had severe difficulties within the family, in school, and often in the community. Most of the students, although of average intelligence, have long histories of severe school problems and are achieving far below grade level. At home, the students face (and help to generate) conflicts and in some instances physical or emotional abuse within the family. Parents often find them "impossible" and "unmanageable". As they enter Daniel Memorial, students may be defiant, aggressive, or withdrawn. They lack self-confidence and even the most elementary social skills. Students can also be eager to please and to learn, proud of their accomplishments, thankful for the chance to succeed, and sometimes affectionate.

The staff at Daniel Memorial includes two cottage teams each including a cottage director, a therapist, and six counselors; the teaching staff headed by a director of education; and central administrative and support personnel. Counselors, social workers and teachers form treatment teams which, along with parents and students, set goals and periodically review progress. Teachers and counselors are called upon to work closely together since they are the staff who work closely with the students throughout the day.

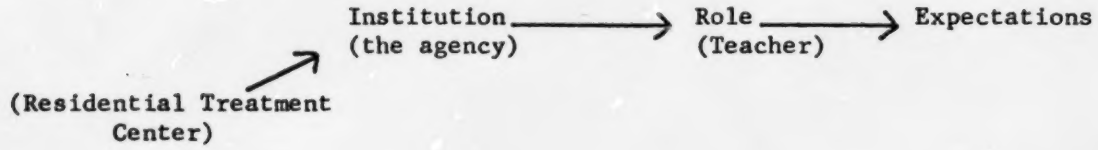
Students attend school on campus, with the exception of a few who test themselves out in public school before they are discharged. Morning classes are primarily academic. In "Basics" the students work from individual assignment sheets on math, reading, and language arts. A tutor provides additional help and motivation for students with the greatest learning problems. Social studies and science classes are conducted more on a total-class basis. The afternoon provides teachers and students with opportunities to enjoy artistic and enrichment activities. This year a grant from the Florida Council for the Arts has provided us with guest artists who have offered elective classes in poetry, drama, painting, pottery, and music. We also have dance and sewing classes taught by volunteers, physical education, and swimming lessons. School continues in the summer with a summer program planned by a committee made up of teachers, students and counselors.

The purpose of this paper is to look at the "Agony and Ecstacy" of teaching emotionally troubled adolescents in this setting. It is the premise of this paper that a teacher or administrator can work more effectively if conflicts which cause agony are recognized and understood, even if all of them cannot be disposed of. Attention will also be given to areas of satisfaction, the ecstacies which can so easily be overlooked in an agency which confronts the conflicts and unhappiness of its clients daily.

What happens when a teacher who has a need for tranquility and order is placed in a position in which he faces hostility or unexpected behaviors? What if an agency, clients in crisis, or a person's own conscientiousness result in an expectation that the employee work long hours - - when the employee also needs to be with his or her own family? How will a teacher's strong motivation for achievement affect job performance?

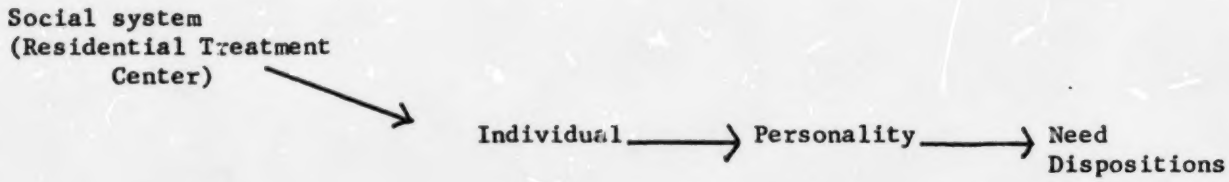
To provide a framework for this discussion of conflict, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction it may be helpful to use a model - - in this case a scheme developed by Jacob Getzels and Egon Guba in 1957. The nice thing about a model is that, like a model airplane, while building it you can shape it and paint it to suit your purpose. After building the Getzels-Guba model, we will shape it and paint it to let it help us visualize the position of the teacher in the residential treatment setting.

The Getzels-Guba model shows the organizational and personal dimensions of behavior in a social system (such as a school, office, or residential treatment center). Using Daniel Memorial as an example, we see the <u>organizational dimension</u> as follows:



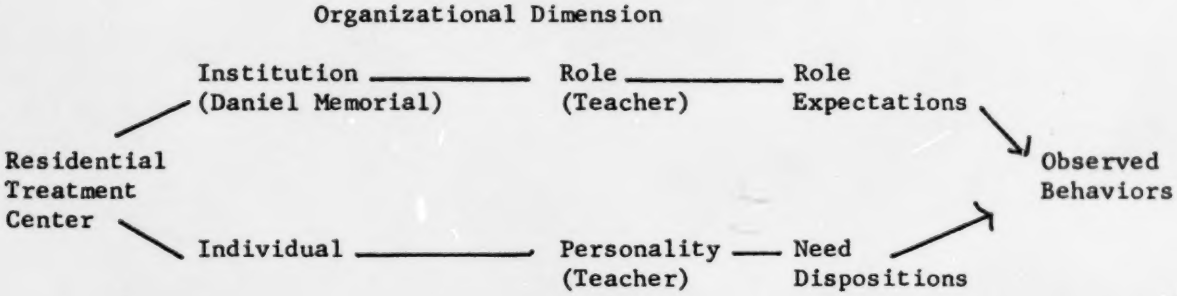
This line can be read: Within the social system of Daniel Memorial is the insitituion or agency itself which asks its employees to play certain roles (in this case, teacher) according to the agency's expectations for those roles.

The other half of the model looks at the personal dimension of the social system:



This line can be read: Within Daniel Memorial the individual acts and responds according to his personality which is determined by his needs

and the ways in which he acts upon those needs ("need dispositions"). The objective of the person using this model is to bring the two dimensions - the organizational and the personal - into as much congruence as possible. Some kind of balance is sought between the organization and the personalities who work for it.



As a model is assembled, we begin to see some of the possibilities for conflict which can obstruct the satisfaction or increase the dissatisfaction of the teacher within the system. Before going on to discuss the teacher, it should be emphasized that the child, with his personality, needs, and roles is central to the entire discussion. The children provide a climate in which the teacher works, act as catalysts who prompt staff to consider their work surroundings and personal motivations, and, at the same time, exert pressures which make objectivity difficult. (This entire scheme can also be drawn to show the adolescent in relation to his peer group, the child in relation to his family, or the student in relation to school).

The first type of conflict the model describes are differences in role expectations for the employee. Teachers at Daniel Memorial and throughout the U.S. often feel that the role of instructor and motivator are contradictory with the role of authority figure and classroom manager, particularly on those days when behavior problems pre-empt teaching and learning in academic areas. "If I could only teach!" is a common lament which stems from the fact that teachers are required to assume a complexity of roles. Also, an agency can ask an employee to play different roles at the same time, causing tension and confusion. This occurred in the early stages of the treatment program at Daniel Memorial when this writer was both a teacher (requiring time for lesson planning, consistent presence in the classroom, and attention to relationships with staff and students) and an administrator (requiring absences from the classroom for other duties and concentration on a myriad of issues facing a new and growing school).

Another problem relating to role expectations for teachers is that different people can see the teacher's role differently. For instance, while a teacher at Daniel Memorial may see her role as helping a student to achieve at the highest level he is capable of, the parents may unconsciously see the teacher's role as helping the child accept their assumption that he cannot achieve. While the adolescent and the new teacher just out of

college may seek to develop the teacher's "buddy" role, other staff will be defining that teacher's role quite differently.

There will be many times when people on interdisciplinary teams will have different role expectations for each other. In a given instance an angry teacher who has sent a disruptive student back to the cottage may expect the counselor to assume a tough authority posture, but the counselor may end up listening to the student and working on problem-solving. Or, a counselor in the evening, encountering a resistent student and wondering how a teacher could be so cruel as to assign Johnny this difficult homework may become very understanding and nurturing - while Johnny knows, but does not reveal, that the work is well within his capabilities. Particularly new teachers joining a social work-oriented staff may expect the therapist, who appears from a distance to be the ultimate expert, to provide definitive answers to un-answerable questions.

If the staff does not, of its own inclination, see the need to clarify these role expectations through on-going communication, manipulative students will soon train them to do so. This is not to say that staff who are on-line with kids and working staggered shifts will find communication and clarity of mutual expectations an easy task. Several guidelines have emerged from our experiences:

1. Establish a basic set of written guidelines around role expectations. These can be referred to time and time again and passed on to new staff.

2. Keep in mind that trust is basically knowing what to expect from the other guy. Discuss any incidents where there were confusions or differences of expectations within 24 hours, by phone if necessary. As much as possible keep these discussions focused on roles, not personalities or competencies.

3. Explore the commonalities of expectations. Promote an atmosphere of a common orientation - "We are all child care workers; some of us work primarily in the classroom, others in the girls' cottage, others in a group therapy setting". Supervisors may have to take the lead in breaking down turf issues.

4. Realize that communication will never be complete or perfect and that all staff will enter situations where they must act without full information. Realize that there will be differences and that they will be resolved - until the next time. Use staff with longevity to help others see the cyclical nature of staff communication problems so the momentary "crisis" can be put in perspective.

5. Use opportunities for joint meetings of staff, but do not rely on formal meetings as "the" devise for communication. Meetings take time, and someone has to be with the kids.

Experienced workers who use guidelines like these and who see roles clearly will find the interdisciplinary team on enriching and supportive

aspect of the work.

In addition to differences in role expectations, the teacher faces a second source of difficulties on the job. Conflicts occur within the individual when two or more personal values or needs are contradictory or when the needs cannot be fulfilled on the job. Daniel Memorial has lost staff when the need to be conscientious on the job confronted family needs and responsibilities. As mentioned above, the teacher may have to resolve needs to be "popular" with other needs to be in control. The staff who wants to "help" may find their help rejected by troubled clients. A teacher who has a need to achieve and be successful may find the lack of the agency's ability to guarantee "success" very hard to live with. Finally, a specific difficulty the teachers at Daniel Memorial have struggled with is the conflict between the need to take sick leave and to be loyal to the follow teachers who will work harder in their absence.

When the individual with his needs and the agency with its expectations meet, the third area for potential difficulties becomes apparent. The idea that the organization and employee may differ is not a new one. Daniel Memorial, like other agencies, seeks to balance agency goals and concern for both the individual client and the employee. Conflicts between role expecations for the teacher and personal needs can be illustrated with a few examples:

-- A teacher spends the day in an emotionally charged setting and has the need to appear somewhat sane when arriving home in the evening.

-- A teacher has a creative inspiration to develop into a lesson plan but has to talk with a student about a problem in class and write a case review before tomorrow.

-- A teacher who gains a great deal of satisfaction from planning and working out problems independently may find the team approach a cumbersome obstacle to the feeling of independent accomplishment.

The agency's and the individual's expectations can, on the other hand, be congruent:

-- A teacher who seeks challenge is provided with a role which provides an abundance of it.

-- A teacher who is seeking relationships beyond a superficial level is in a setting where staff and student relationships can be intense and meaningful.

-- A teacher who is seeking the opportunity to individualize instruction to meet students' needs is expected to do just that.

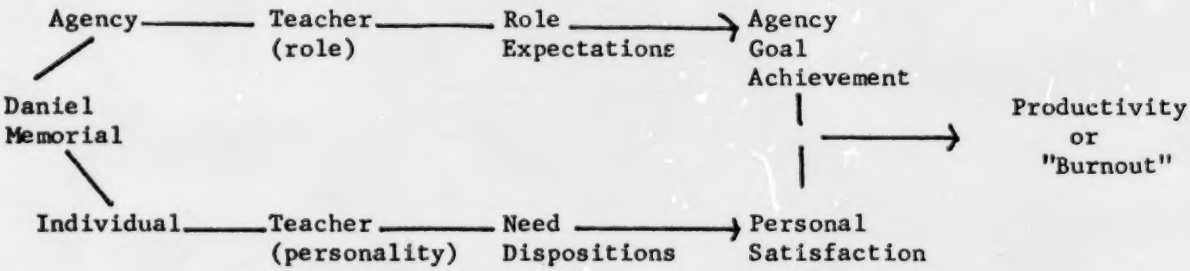
Finally, teachers discussing their job satisfactions and dissatisfactions at Daniel Memorial discover that their roles include some "agstacies" -- instances in which agony and ecstacy can be produced by common elements of the job:

-- The teachers' concern and involvement which produce excitment and pride in their work and the students' progress also bring emotional pain when children fail.

-- The unpredictability of student behavior and responses keeps a teacher challenged, but also at times off balance. One teacher described a Paradox of Surprises -- because there are so many surprises, there are no surprises. In any case, teachers feel the pressure of having to be constantly aware of themselves and their students throughout the entire school day.

-- The production of a Christmas program or Spring Festival generate pride and satisfaction for teachers and students - but only after anxiety has produced temper tantrums, pouting, or defiance in the days before.

One last extension of the model may help summarize the effects of finding congruence or conflicts in the organizational and personal dimensions of the social system:



The end product of the organizational dimension when employees fulfill the agency's role expectations is productivity toward the agency's goals. The end product of the individual serving within the agency in ways which meet personal needs is a sense of personal satisfaction. When agency's goal achievement and the individual's personal satisfaction are in harmony, the observed behavior will be a combining of energies and purpose toward productivity. "Burnout", on the other hand, can be defined as the situation when the agonies which will be faced in working toward agency goals become too great and the employee is no longer able to gain a sense of personal satisfaction.

I think the Getzels-Guba model, used as a framework for discussing the role of the teacher in a residential treatment setting, can be useful in three ways. First, it can be used to predict areas of potential difficulties in the selection of personnel and the delineation of role functions. Second, it can be used to describe and interpret some natural interactions which occur within any educational setting or other social system. Finally, it may serve as a diagnostic tool at times when dissatisfaction appears vague or blatant, but the source of the feelings is not known. The user can be assured that he is welcome to shape and paint the model in ways which help him conceptualize the world in which he lives and works.